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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE
DECISION RECORD

HATCHERY CREEK TIMBER SALE
EA-OR090-08-01

Background:
An Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) for the proposed McKenzie Tribs Projects (EA-OR090-08-01) were prepared by the Upper Willamette Resource Area, Eugene District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This timber sale was analyzed as part of that project, and would occur on approximately 250 acres located in T. 16 S., R 1 E., section 25. Land allocations include Matrix (including Adaptive Management Areas) Riparian Reserves, and Bald Eagle Habitat Areas (BEHAs) are also included. Actions may include thinning in upland and Riparian Reserves, creation of snags and coarse wood debris, road improvements, culvert replacements, temporary road construction and road decommissioning.

Purpose and Objectives:
The need for action in Matrix and Riparian Reserves has been established through the results of field reviews and stand examinations, which indicate that stands would benefit from thinning or density management. Currently, the stands are dense, overstocked and are uniform in structure. This results in reduced tree growth and stand vigor. Also in Riparian Reserves, stand examination show that stands are deficient in late-successional structural components. Treatment would increase stand vigor, growth rates, crown differentiation and complexity. Additional benefits for treating Riparian Reserves would be to acquire desired vegetation characteristics, which would help to attain watershed aquatic conservation objectives.

The purposes of the actions in Matrix are to meet the objectives given in the Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP). Some listed objectives are to (1) Produce a sustainable supply of timber and other forest commodities to provide jobs and to contribute to community stability; (2) Provide habitat for a variety of organisms associated with both late-successional and younger forests and maintain valuable structural components, such as down logs and snags (pg. 34). Direction for road management is stated on page 98 of the RMP, which directs the BLM to, “manage roads to meet the needs identified under other resource programs.”

Additional direction from the RMP directs that the CCAMA (Central Cascades Adaptive Management Area) contribute substantially to the provision of a stable timber supply (RMP, p. 32). Stands in the CCAMA would be thinned according to recommendations outlined in a BLM developed landscape design called the Middle McKenzie Landscape Design (MMLD), which uses a management strategy to achieve ecological and social objectives based upon historical fire disturbance regimes. Generally the MMLD recommends that stands be thinned to increase wind-firmness and to develop crowns on future retention trees. The need to thin in the CCAMA is based on stand exams that show the stands are at a high density, which is decreasing vigor and growth of the trees.

The purpose for action in Riparian Reserves is to enhance or maintain late-successional forest conditions, acquire or maintain characteristics needed to attain Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives, and provide habitat for Special Status Species (RMP, p.18, 23).

The purpose for action in the BEHA is to comply with the Recovery Plan for the Pacific Bald Eagle and existing, site-specific habitat management plans, such as *the McKenzie Bald Eagle Management Plan* (RMP, p. 62). Management objectives are to: (1) maintain or enhance individual large trees with late seral characteristics (e.g., large side limbs, large crowns) for nesting; (2) maintain or enhance stands with mature to late seral characteristics for nesting and/or midwinter roosting; (3) minimize human access and visual and line-of-sight noise disturbances that could affect nesting behavior. The need for action is established by stand examinations that show the stands within the BEHA are uniform in structure and lacking habitat elements for Bald Eagles.

Decision:
Based on the analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment No. 0R090-EA-08-01 and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), it is my decision to implement Alternative 2 and all associated Project Design Features (PDFs). This alternative proposes to thin approximately 250 acres of Matrix and Riparian Reserve. Thinning would be designed to increase tree size through time, extend the culmination of mean annual increment and capture anticipated mortality. The stands would be thinned from below; i.e., trees selected for harvest would be the suppressed, intermediate, and co-dominant conifer trees. Cut trees would be Douglas-fir and western hemlock. This prescription would result in a stand of variable spacing.

In addition to the commercial thinning throughout the BEHA stands, this proposal would also designate approximately 150 target trees; all trees within a 50 foot radius (0.18 acre) of that target tree would be removed. This treatment is designed to accelerate the development of suitable nest trees. The final arrangement of selected trees would be randomly spaced with occasional clumping.

Silvicultural treatments would occur in the outer edges of the Riparian Reserve and would be treated the same as the upland. Depending on channel stability, effective shade zone needed, and current stand conditions, the no-harvest buffers adjacent to the streams would vary between 75 and 200 feet. Seeps and springs would have no-harvest buffers ranging between 25 to 50 feet. The buffers for wetlands would vary from the hydric soil boundary to 220 feet.

Under this alternative and within this sale, approximately 264 feet of temporary road would be constructed.

Public Comment and Updated EA Information:
The McTribs Project EA was advertised in November of 2007, in the Eugene Register Guard, as available for a 30-day public review period. Two comment letters were received during the review period. Comments from these letters were mainly subjective. However, one comment did highlight an error in the EA concerning an omission of some course woody debris project design and analysis. The updated information, described below, has been considered but does not negatively alter the overall analysis conclusions of the EA:

- The EA states on pgs. 4 and 25 that thinning in Riparian Reserves is intended to speed the development of late-successional characteristics, such as larger diameter conifer trees as compared to unthinned stands. However, the analysis should have been expanded to reflect that thinning would also remove some of the trees that may have

been recruited for course woody debris within the next few decades. The full analysis is below:

Alternative 1: No Action
Proposed harvest areas would continue to recruit mostly small-medium diameter coarse woody debris (e.g., less than 20 inch diameter) through typical natural stand processes seen in young/mid-seral stands (e.g., stem exclusion and density-induced mortality) for several decades. The amount of large coarse woody debris (e.g., greater than 20 inch diameter) recruitment would be minimal until these area begin to enter mature/late-seral stage (approximately 60-100 years)

Alternative 2 and 3: (Action Alternative(s))
Unthinned portions of Riparian Reserves would continue to recruit mostly small-medium diameter coarse woody debris (e.g., less than 20 inch diameter) through typical natural stand processes seen in young/mid-seral stands (e.g., stem exclusion and density-induced mortality) for several decades. The amount of large coarse woody debris recruitment (e.g., greater than 20 inch diameter) would be minimal until these areas begin to enter mature/late-seral stage.

In thinned portions of Riparian Reserves, coarse woody debris recruitment over the next few decades would be greatly reduced compared to the No Action Alternative because these trees would be removed. However, thinning would accelerate growth rates of dominant/codominant trees and thereby accelerate the time when these areas would begin to provide large coarse woody debris recruitment through typical natural stand processes seen in mature/late seral stands (e.g., windthrow, breakage, and disease-induced mortality).

- It was also not reflected in the EA that the action alternatives would include the creation of course woody debris in thinned portions of the Riparian Reserves to mitigate the loss of natural recruitment due to thinning. Creation would consist of approximately 3 snags and 5 down log trees per acre.

Decision Rationale:
My decision to authorize the proposed action is in compliance with the *Eugene District RMP* and the *Northwest Forest Plan*. Alternative 2 was selected because it best meets the purpose and need described in the EA (p. 1). Treatments would provide and help to create a sustainable supply of timber in the uplands while manage stocking and species composition in the Riparian Reserves; the proposed action would maintain and create valuable structural components such as snags and down wood, and improve water quality through road-related actions.

I did not select the No Action alternative because it did not meet the Purpose and Need for the project.

Compliance:
On the basis of the information contained in the attached Environmental Assessment, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts not already addressed in the *Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (April 1994)* and *the Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (June 1995*), Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS) Objectives listed on page B-11 of th*e Northwest Forest Plan,* with which this EA is in

conformance, and does not, in and of itself, constitute a major federal action having significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, a new environmental impact statement or supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared.

Furthermore, on July 25, 2007, the Under Secretary of the Department of the Interior signed a new Survey and Manage Record of Decision that removed the survey and manage requirements from all of the BLM RMPs within the range of the northern spotted owl. In any case, this project falls within at least one of the exceptions listed in the modified October 11, 2006 injunction.

Administrative Review Opportunities:
The decision to implement this project may be protested under 43 CFR 5003 - Administrative Remedies. In accordance with 43 CFR 5003.2, the decision for this project will not be subject to protest until the notice of sale is first published in the Eugene Register-Guard. This published notice of sale will constitute the decision document for the purpose of protests of this project (43 CFR 5003.2b). Protests of this decision must be filed with this office within fifteen (15) days after first publication of the notice of sale.

As interpreted by BLM, the regulations do not authorize the acceptance of protests in any form other than a signed, written hard copy that is delivered to the physical address of the BLM Eugene District Office.

Approved by:

William O'Sullivan

_____ Date: August 8____, 2008

William O'Sullivan,
Upper Willamette Resource Area Manager